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JOURNALIST

RATHER: It was at the Venice Film Festival a year ago that the foreign cultural editor of the Soviet weekly Literary Gazette defected to Britain. At the time, he complained about Soviet censorship. That was not his complaint today at an unusual Moscow news conference. Tom Fenton in London reports.

FENTON: The last trace of Oleg Bitov in England was at the Soviet Embassy. His car was found abandoned there after his mysterious disappearance a month ago. Today, he turned up at a Moscow press conference where he told tales of British agents drugging and beating him into defecting. OLEG\BITOV (translated from the Russian): I was subjected to every sophisticated technique that was used against me, modern drugs, psychological treatment and so on, violence and torture.

FENTON: Bitov gave the addresses of two so-called safe houses in the London area where he said British agents held him after his arrival in Britain. He also gave the names of British intelligence agents he described as his captors and two telephone numbers Bitov said belonged to British intelligence. No one was talking today. VOICE OF UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN (on audio tape from telephone): I, I'm afraid I can't answer any of those questions 'cause I don't know. I'm just answering the telephone at the moment.

FENTON: The British government said Bitov came here voluntarily and even made a two-month's trip to the United States. Western friends said Bitov thoroughly enjoyed London where he wrote anti-Soviet articles. But towards the end, they found him moody and concerned about the wife and daughter he'd left behind in Moscow. DUFF\HART-DAVIS (business associate of Bitov): Well, I'm afraid he's in for a very bad time because he's committed high treason in the eyes of the state. And even though they've put this front up in the press conference, I don't see him going back to his family. I'm afraid I see him going to jail.

FENTON: Here at British Intelligence, the information Bitov gave at his press conference is described as not very damaging. The intelligence officers whose cover was blown were undoubtedly transferred to other posts when Bitov fled. The real damage is that Bitov's return to Soviet life may discourage other would-be defectors. Tom Fenton, CBS News, London.